



Vocational Education and Training- A Vital Tool for Youth Employability and Growth

EUROCHAMBRES' RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Accelerate efforts to remove the obstacles to the internationalisation of VET and foster greater mobility of learners, teachers and trainers.
2. Pursue a strategy to promote VET as a viable, attractive option that enjoys a parity of esteem and enhanced permeability vis à vis full-time tertiary education.
3. Increase significantly the proportion of the post 2014 'Erasmus for All' EU education programme dedicated to VET. These funds should be used to provide the EU level support set out in the Bruges Communique and fundamentally to stimulate the internationalisation of VET.
4. Where appropriate, channel the use of structural and cohesion funds (both the current and the post 2014 financing period) to support reforms the establishment of dual learning apprenticeship systems.
5. Design VET systems in a way that encourages young people to think entrepreneurially, a mindset that will benefit both the employer and individual and will ultimately lead to the establishment of more businesses and thus the creation of growth and jobs.
6. Ensure that initial and continuing VET systems allow young people to acquire and maintain strong ICT skills, increasingly a precondition to employment and career enhancement, given that by 2015, 90% of jobs will need at least basic ICT skills.
7. Recognise and reinforce the important role of trusted business intermediary organisations, not least Chambers of Commerce and Industry, in the governance of VET policies and the development and delivery of VET systems at EU and national level.

We invite policy-makers to take these recommendations into account in their ongoing discussions on jobs and growth, in monitoring and delivering Europe 2020 and in finalising the inter-institutional negotiations on the 2014-20 Multi-Annual Financial Framework.



A MAJOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGE FOR EUROPE

Europe 2020, Europe's growth strategy, includes a target to increase the employment rate across all member states from its current level of around 69% to 75% by 2020. Achieving this target will mean reducing the number of unemployed people in the EU from around 23 million (9.5% of the workforce) at the start of 2011 to less than 12 million (5% of the workforce) in 2020.

Perversely, while millions of Europeans cannot find employment, there are currently over two million unfilled job vacancies in the EU. This incongruity points on the one hand to a mismatch between the skills on offer from the workforce and those required by employers and on the other to a lack of mobility among European workers. If allowed to continue, this destructive combination would see EU unemployment spiral and the economy stagnate.

Youth unemployment has long been a cause for concern in several EU member states and the situation has become more acute as a consequence of the economic crisis. 5.5 million under 25s are currently unemployed, at a rate of 22.4%. In some countries, such as Spain or Greece, youth unemployment is approaching 50%. Moreover, an increasing number of Europeans - 7.5 million according to the most recent data - are not in either employment, education or training. This trend presents the risk that a whole generation will become socially and economically disenfranchised.

Meanwhile, the demand for labour with high or medium qualifications is projected to rise. Jobs requiring high-level qualifications will increase to 35% in 2020 (from 29% in 2010) and jobs requiring medium-level qualifications will remain at a significant 50%. The share of jobs demanding only those with low qualifications will further decrease from 20% to less than 15%.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING CENTRAL TO THE RESPONSE

Chambers of Commerce and Industry firmly believe that initial and continuing vocational education and training (VET) must be central to the EU's response to these challenges. While several countries with high levels of tertiary education are also suffering high youth unemployment, none of the countries with robust VET systems do. EUROCHAMBRES is convinced that the above **recommendations** to EU and national policy makers will contribute to the delivery of the Europe 2020 employment and education targets¹ and correspond with the vision for VET in 2020 endorsed by EU member states in the 2010 Bruges Communiqué².

European Chambers of Commerce and Industry play a pivotal role in the development and delivery of vocational education and training policy. **In a typical year, over 2.5 million people receive training qualifications from Chambers.** In some countries, Chambers are the second largest training providers after the public sector. They cooperate closely with businesses and thus recognise the importance of on-the-job training at all levels, notably through apprenticeships or internships. This explains why, for example, **European Chambers manage nearly one million apprenticeships per year.**

¹ 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed, at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing tertiary or equivalent education

² Bruges Communiqué on Enhanced Cooperation in Vocational Education & Training, signed by the EU member states, the EU candidate countries, the European Commission and the European Social Partners, 7/12/10: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf